DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 976 EA 022 654

TITLE	Good Practices: A Selection. Tasmanian Government Schools and Secondary Colleges 1984-87.
INSTITUTION	Tasmanian Education Dept., Hobart (Australia).
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-7246-1383-8
PUB DATE	88
NOTE	51p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College School Cooperation; Curriculum Development; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Foreign Countries; Postsecondary Education; Program Descriptions; Program Implementation; School Community Relationship; *School Involvement; *School Organization; *School Restructuring; Student School Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Australia (Tasmania); *Commonwealth Schools Commission (Australia)

ABSTRACT

In 1983 the Australian Commonwealth Government announced its new Participation and Equity Program (PEP). To allow schools to focus on new directions, substantial amounts of money were allocated to the states through the PEP so that they could develop programs that focus on nine major areas: (1) curriculum; (2) assessment, accreditation, and credentialling; (3) teacher/student/parent interaction; (4) teacher renewal and support; (5) school structure and organization; (6) post-link schools; (7) groups with special needs; (8) public support for education; and (9) education and the arts. This document describes some of the major concerns of PEP, examples of how individual schools have met these concerns, and 10 different programs implemented in individual Tasmanian schools. (EJS)

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PARTICIPATION & EQUITY PROGRAM

ED327976

A Selection of

GOOD PRACTICES

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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TASMANIA AUSTRALIA

COMMONWEALTH SCHOOLS COMMISSION
PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY PROGRAM

A SELECTION OF

GOOD PRACTICES

TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AND
SECONDARY COLLEGES 1984-87

Education Department Tasmania Australia

Acknowledgements

Most of the information in this document was collected as a result of visits to schools and colleges. The contributions from individual principals, teachers, project officers, students and parents are gratefully acknowledged.

Particular contributions from San Fitzgibbon (Girls in education: a cluster approach), Lucy Fisher (A cluster approach: alternative assessment) and Paul Kearney (Student Participation) are acknowledged also.

Thanks are due to Graeme Dazeley who provided the cartoons for this publication.

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First published 1988
ISBN 0 7246 1383 8
88/0065

Education Department,
Tasmania, Australia.
Printed by I Carter,
Acting Government Printer,
Tasmania.

Contents

Introduction 5

Making changes to school curriculum and organisation 7

Whole school re-organisation – St Helens District High School. 8
Introducing unitisation – Bridgewater High School. 10
Self esteem in the curriculum – Rokeby High School. 13
Liaison with primary schools – Brooks High School. 15

Supporting teacher renewal 19

Teacher Direct Assistance Program – Wynyard High School. 20
A cluster approach: self esteem. 23
A cluster approach: alternative assessment. 25

Improving access to senior secondary colleges 27

Orientation program – Rosebery District High School. 28
Community College Centre – Oatlands District High School, Rosny College. 30
The senior secondary college response. 32

Improving opportunities for special groups 37

Girls and computers – Flinders Island District High School. 38
Girls in education – a cluster approach. 40
Homework centres for Aboriginal students. 42
Integration of students with special needs. 44

Encouraging student and parent participation 47

Parents and school change – Cosgrove High School. 48
Student participation – some examples. 50

INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the Commonwealth Government announced its new Participation and Equity Program.

Susan Ryan, Federal Minister of Education, told the Parliament in December, 1983

> We want all young people to participate in education or training to year 12 or equivalent and for that education or training to offer all young people equal opportunities to develop their potential and thus produce more equal educational outcomes.
> No student should leave school without the basic knowledge and skills needed to live a worthwhile and satisfying adult life in a modern technological society, and every student should have the opportunity to discover and develop individual interests and talents. All students should be challenged to aim for the highest standards in whatever they do.

In order to allow schools to focus on these directions in education, substantial amounts of money were allocated to the states through the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) so that they could develop programs which focussed on these major areas:

- curriculum
- assessment, accreditation and credentialling
- teacher/student/parent interaction
- teacher renewal and support
- school structure and organisation
- post-school links (especially with TAFE)
- groups with special needs
- public support for education
- education and the arts (added 1986)

Since the program began in 1984, a great deal has happened in Tasmanian schools as a result of PEP funding. This document attempts to record some of the good practices which have emerged in high schools, district high schools, special schools and senior secondary colleges with the help of PEP funds. It is hoped that, with the cessation of funding at the end of 1987, this document may help to keep alive the initiatives undertaken in so many areas over the last four years.

What is a PEP project?

PEP funding was first made available to schools in 1984, when it was allocated on the basis of submissions from schools and other interested parties.

Since 1985, Commonwealth guidelines have required that there should be certain target schools which receive PEP funds. These schools were chosen through a complicated process which looked at retention rates, socio-economic factors, and in some cases, rurality. As well as this, there were funds available for central initiatives such as the employment of officers like the PEP project manager and curriculum consultants, and the setting up of school cluster programs.

One of the difficulties of describing PEP programs in schools is that none of these programs exists in isolation from all the other things that are happening in those schools. Neither is it possible to say that PEP money was the only money used to finance any one program. In some cases, the school was ready for change in any case, while in others, a variety of funding sources may have contributed to the program.

Despite these factors, the underlying assumption of this document is that PEP philosophies have contributed to the programs described, and that, to a large extent, PEP funds have made the programs possible.

About this document

It is:

- an attempt to identify some of the major concerns of PEP and to show how some individual schools have met these concerns
- a way of sharing with the community, parents, students and teachers ideas which may bear fruit in other schools.

It is not:

- an evaluation; the articles are merely descriptive
- a complete picture of everything that has happened through PEP.

Most of all:

- it is acknowledged that many schools other than the ones described here have developed highly successful PEP programs. The constraint of space has made it necessary to select a range of programs which might be of interest to other schools.

Making changes to school curriculum and organisation

PEP is essentially about curriculum change. Funding has been made available so that schools can evaluate what they are offering their students in terms of whether it is equitable for all, and whether it encourages the greatest participation of all students. This is not only in terms of retention past the years of compulsory schooling, but also in terms of each student participating to the fullest degree possible during high schools years. A high priority was to encourage schools to involve the widest possible range of input into this school review, so that parents and students as well as teachers were involved.

A number of curriculum issues were considered:

- are curriculum offerings relevant to the needs of students and do they provide opportunities for success for all students?
- how can parents and students contribute to the devising of a curriculum?
- is school structure and organisation geared to educational rather than administrative needs?
- is consideration being given to the impact of early experiences of high school which might serve to turn children away from continuing education?

Many schools have undertaken whole school reviews in the last four years. This has led to the introduction of changes such as unitisation, vertical grouping, self-esteem courses, and new pastoral care arrangements. In undertaking these reviews, schools have involved students and parents so that their concerns and suggestions can be taken into account.

Consequently, there has been an opening up of these schools to their community, and in many cases there is an ongoing involvement of parents in the day to day affairs of the schools. Some schools have expanded the notion of student involvement by exploring and trialling techniques for negotiating the curriculum, while others have become involved in the area of student enterprise. Other schools have improved their relationship with their feeder primary schools thus easing the transition between grades 6 and 7 and maintaining positive attitudes to school.

The following articles contain specific examples of how a number of schools have dealt with the issues outlined above.

7

WHOLE SCHOOL RE-ORGANISATION

St Helens District High School

The Commission recommends: 'providing for flexibility in the forms of teaching and learning in schools; and supporting new approaches to the use of time in schools which allow for curriculum adaption and diversification consistent with the needs of all students'.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985

St. Helens District High School is an example of a school that has taken on the PEP philosophy by introducing new programs and structures into the school which are aimed at improving the quality of education for all its students. In 1985 St Helens began a whole school review, the intention of which was to cater more fully for the individual needs of students.

The review began with the establishment of a committee consisting of staff, parents and students, where common concerns were discussed and the focus - individual student needs - was clarified. Two studies were undertaken; students surveying student opinion, and parents surveying parent opinion. A strong response from the students' PEP committee led to social science being made a basic subject, and increased time being given to pastoral care. As well as these surveys, with PEP funding, two teams of three people, each consisting of a parent, a student and a teacher, set out for a week's visit to two schools; one in South Australia and one in New South Wales. The South Australian school, Burroughs High, had a completely unitised curriculum, while the New South Wales school, St Marys College, Grafton, had individualised programs for each of its students in all subjects.

Armed with the information gained from these visits, the delegates, with their three different perspectives, returned to St Helens to present their findings to other teachers, parents and students. An important feature of these meetings was the involvement of teachers and parents from the primary section of the school; their contribution can clearly be seen in the program that eventually developed. Many hours of discussion and workshopping took place, often in the evenings and at weekends until a common philosophy and directions for school change were formulated. At this stage a great deal of the work was handed over to a committee of teachers made up of John Hoult, John Marshall and Peter Reinmuth. Their task was to implement the new program.

The central concern was that the needs of individual students be catered for; that each student was valued, well known and given as much freedom of choice as possible. The first initiative was to create base groups with which the students would develop a strong sense of identity and where they would study their English, mathematics, science and social science. Students were vertically grouped; 7's and 8's together, and 9's and 10's together. Each group was to have two teachers; a maths, science teacher and an English, social science teacher. This is where the input of the primary school parents and teachers is to be seen. The secondary section of the school is attempting to maintain some of the benefits of primary school organisation, in particular the way a teacher gets to know the children in her class and the sense of belonging children have there. The school is interested too in including grade 6 children in these groups and is still working on a strategy to enable this to happen.

The strong pastoral care element and the continuity provided by base time allowed for the unitisation of optional subjects. Like many other schools, St Helens finds that unitisation is an excellent scheme for creating diversity of

choice and for giving students responsibility for their own learning programs. It allows the school to make optimum use of teachers and has led to the introduction of extra units which are specifically geared for the area the school serves, for example 'Aquatic Survival and Emergency Care', 'Coastal Navigation' and 'Outdoor Pursuits'. The timetabling of classes and the organisation of line structures creates a great deal of extra work for John Marshall; however, a booklet describing all the units available, the ease of counselling in a small school, and the use of a computer program all facilitate his task.

Unitisation, and indeed any change to school organisation, sometimes creates a problem for parents who are often confused about what is going on, how it is going to affect their children, and what implications it has for certification. In order to overcome these problems, St Helens employed a liaison officer, Mrs Blunt, whose task was to explain the new system to parents and children. Before the scheme began she spoke to the parents of all the children who would be involved the following year, as well as to the students themselves. The result was that when the new base time and unitisation system was adopted the program began smoothly and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Other schemes were started in the school as a result of the school review. One of the ideas the parents liked at Burroughs was the Learning Assistance Program (LAP). The school now runs LAP, which involves parents coming into the school and helping students with their studies. Parents also became aware of the importance of encouraging students to go on to further education, and fostered the development of the school's orientation week which was initiated with Transition Education funding. During this week, students live in self-contained units in Launceston, where they are responsible for everything from budgeting to cooking and cleaning. They visit secondary colleges, TAFE and the Maritime College.

Another program, CARE (Children Accepting Responsibility for Education) has been adopted as a result of the review. This involves students in signing up for extra work in one or more of the basic subjects for two periods a week. For students, this means a measure of independence in deciding how best to make use of the time, and for teachers it means a careful planning of work to allow students to benefit from the extra time.

Peter Reinmuth was particularly impressed by the individualised learning program he saw in operation at St Marys College, Grafton, and completely revised his science course for the senior school so that students now work through a series of modules. He finds this most successful and explains that many students are completing much more work than their previous results indicated they were capable of. He has spent a great deal of time preparing the modules, but now that students are working at their own pace he finds that he has more class time to spend with each one. Individual students are motivated by working to achieve their own deadlines. Vertical grouping, and a variety of available modules makes it possible for students to surge ahead in their work.

Teachers and students at St Helens are positive about the benefits of the new programs in the school. Although students were wary at first about the vertical groupings, they are now enthusiastic, and although teachers worried in the beginning that unitisation might make more work, they now appreciate the way that unitisation calls for efficient planning and use of time.

Because of the way PEP funding has been used in this school its cessation will not mean an end to the program. It is well and truly established and because such a thorough process of review was undertaken using parents, teachers and students from throughout the school, there is a consensus about the value of the changes which bodes well for the program's continuation.

INTRODUCING UNITISATION

Bridgewater High School

Schools need to be organised so that time is divided in ways consistent with the desired learning outcomes ... flexibility in the way the school year is structured can greatly broaden the range and depth of studies available to students.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

The introduction of PEP funding coincided with the readiness of many schools to look closely at their curriculum. Several perceived that the way to satisfy a need for greater diversity in their offerings was to unitise the curriculum. During 1985, four schools introduced unitisation, three of them using PEP money. Since then a number of other schools have followed suit. The Curriculum Development and Evaluation section of the Education Department has now completed two evaluation reports on introducing unitisation, and the conclusion is that, despite some problems, unitisation is perceived to be successful by most parents, students and teachers.

One of the schools which introduced unitisation in 1985 was Bridgewater High School, which provides a useful example of how this system can be made to work in a large high school.

What is unitisation?

Unitisation at Bridgewater involves dividing the school year for Grades 9 and 10 into four equal sections of approximately ten weeks each. For convenience, these sections are referred to as semesters. Subject areas offer a choice of units each semester, the number offered depending on the availability of staff. Students choose which units they will study each semester, bearing in mind that they must choose the right combination to ensure them of a School Certificate result in each subject at the end of two years. The general rule is that, over these two years, students must satisfactorily complete, at the appropriate level, a minimum of seven units for a level 3 result, six for level 2, and five for level 1.

How does unitisation provide choice and flexibility?

- Students can have anything from one to three spare semesters left over from any subject they take.
- They can use these spare semesters to gain another whole subject over two years; to take units as short courses; or to do extra units in a subject which they like or where they need extra work.
- Within subjects, more than one unit is offered each semester.
- Few units have pre-requisites, although some subjects have sequential units; commercial practice, shorthand and the woodwork Major Project, which lasts three semesters.

Bridgewater introduced unitisation progressively, beginning with Grade 9 in 1985 and operating it with grades 9 and 10 in subsequent years. The reason for this progressive introduction was the grade system which operates, and which has been significant in the success of the program. The gradual introduction also gave teachers a little more time to complete the demanding task of writing the new units.

One of the objections to unitisation is that it will not work in a large school because students come into contact with too many teachers and lose continuity in their studies. In a school the size of Bridgewater (approximately 600 students) there are twelve humanities teachers, which means that theoretically it would be possible for a student in English to have eight

different teachers over two years. However, because of the grade system, this does not happen. Each grade has a team of teachers, and as far as possible, the team composition stays the same for four years, so that by the time students and teachers reach grades 9 and 10 they are quite well known to each other.

Within the senior school teams there are enough teachers to cover all subjects. For example, there might be two or three humanities teachers on a team and students will always have one of these teachers for English and social science units. They are familiar with the teachers anyway having had them since grade 7, and if there are any difficulties being experienced by students at the beginning of a semester, it is easy for the small number of teachers in a team to communicate with each other. In optional areas, it is probably even easier. There is often only one teacher per option for the senior school, and so, whatever units are offered, the teacher stays the same.

Another advantage of the grade system for unitisation is the time spent in pastoral care. With a ten minute grade assembly starting each day, and a home group time comprising a fifty minute period per day, there is plenty of time for information sharing and for counselling students about choice.

Counselling is intensive at the end of grade 8. While choice is not as critical as under the old system where a student was virtually locked into a choice for two years, it is important that informed choices are made so that the student chooses the most suitable subjects. The chances of making the best of the eight available semesters are much improved if a student does not waste the first one in subjects which are totally unsuitable. At this stage, Bridgewater High makes a concerted effort to inform parents about unitisation. Parents are invited to an evening, which is usually well-attended, where unitisation is explained, and teachers are available to talk about the units offered in their subjects. As well as this, the school has a policy of easy access for parents at any time, and this helps in spreading an understanding of unitisation.

A great deal of time is required for administrative work, and the computer is invaluable here. An aide is employed for ten hours a week to enter choices and line structures into the program, which often has to be done several times until a satisfactory stage is reached. At this point, it is usually necessary for a number of students to change their choices because they don't fit the line structure, but generally this is only a change within a subject. For example instead of doing 'Cooking for Special

Occasions' a student might have to do 'Breads and Pastries'. Very occasionally, if students cannot change within a subject they will double up on another subject, leaving themselves with a spare semester later to pick up the subject they had to drop. The re-organisation and counselling required here is usually done by a vice-principal and the grade co-ordinator who both have time allocations for this task.

Bridgewater High believes that unitisation is helping to meet the aims of participation and equity. The fact that teachers are able to offer a variety of units within subject areas means that they are better able to cope with the differing needs of students. Because students have chosen what they will study, and because units give them short term goals, they are motivated to work. Less able students are able to complete the basic requirements for a School Certificate within a shorter time, and respond well to having time left over to take units which are of special interest to them. Many able and gifted students are stimulated and extended by being able to map their own course through grades 9 and 10.

SELF ESTEEM IN THE CURRICULUM

Rokeby High School

(An) important characteristic of schools committed to increasing participation (is) a practical emphasis on personal and social development, including personal qualities such as moral awareness, responsibility and concern for others.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Since the *Wings* project, a pilot program for developing self esteem in girls began in 1983, the belief in the importance of developing self esteem in all students has spread rapidly throughout the Tasmanian education system. With PEP's emphasis on raising the quality of schooling for all young people and on giving all students the capacity to communicate and co-operate effectively with others, self esteem received a further boost, with money being made available, on submission, for target schools to develop programs in self esteem.

Rokeby High School is one school that has addressed the issue of self esteem for students. Over the last few years it has made a large commitment in funds and in energy towards developing programs in the school which will encourage students to have a better image of themselves and thus lead to higher achievements in their education. They hope that the programs they provide are not simply placed alongside all the other educational programs, but become an integral part of students' schooling.

The school's commitment began in a small way. A group of six teachers participated in a *Wings* Self Esteem for Girls seminar in 1984. Returning to school, they were keen to see the ideas they had gained put into practice in the school, and began by running sessions for small groups of girls on extension and enrichment days. These were highly successful and by now it could be seen how beneficial such sessions could be to all students at the school. Funding was sought to provide teacher time to develop and co-ordinate a program which would be of benefit to all, and the granting of this funding led to the appointment in term 2, 1986 of Mrs Gail Close as Self Esteem Project Officer.

A great deal has happened since then, bearing out the theory that having an identifiable person with time allocated facilitates the development of specific programs. As with Cosgrove High's Community Liaison Officer (see page 48), a number of projects have been initiated.

Keys to excellence

Keys is a self esteem program that works on the basis of developing students' self-image and then giving them goal-setting skills which can be applied to their academic endeavours. Early in 1987, Dr Ron Kohn, the author of the program, visited Rokeby High School from Seattle, Washington to train facilitators and introduce the program to parents and staff. A highly motivated person, he enthused the participants at the seminars, and the program began at the school on a trial basis in term 2, 1987.

Keys was taken with grade 8 and 10 students in English and social science by four trained facilitators. Early problems were identified, such as the fact that the program is a little difficult for grade 8 students. It is intended to run the program again in 1988 with Grade 10 students for three weeks. An important aspect of *Keys* is that the nineteen parents who attended Dr Kohn's sessions are highly supportive and keen to see the program continued.

Be a friend

This peer support program, referred to as BAF, is overseen by Ms. Debbie Mackey, a teacher at the school. The basis of the scheme is that

people absorb values from each other, and that these values can be positive or negative. BAF harnesses this interaction and sets it on a positive course by training volunteer grade 10 students to act as leaders for small groups of grade 7 students. Like *Keys*, this program was run on a trial basis in 1987. Because it did not start until term 2, some of the benefits of introducing the sessions as soon as the grade 7s start high school were lost. Nevertheless, according to a survey of students involved, the scheme was highly successful and plans are underway to run it again at the beginning of 1988.

In order to be trained as group leaders for 1988, grade 9 students attended a residential course at Werndee Hostel late in 1987 where they developed leadership skills, self esteem, self confidence and communication skills. In first term 1988, they will be allocated to groups of six to eight grade 7 students and run sessions with them twice a cycle.

Self esteem seminars

These have been run for staff over the last three years. They concentrate on developing self esteem in the teachers, creating bonds between staff members, and providing teachers with methods of developing self esteem in their students.

Effective teaching workshops

These two day sessions have been run at the school by Jennee Davidson from Student Services. About two thirds of the staff have now been involved in the program which helps teachers develop skills in assertiveness, counselling and behaviour management. The idea is that teachers with a high level of skills in these areas will be able to foster relationships with students that reflect caring, friendliness and respect. This means that self esteem is not built up simply in self esteem sessions but is taken into consideration in all teaching situations.

Effective parenting workshops

These were run for parents in 1987 by Gail. The sessions attempt to transmit the same sorts of messages to parents as the teacher workshops transmit to teachers.

Skills for living (SFL)

These SFL groups are run by sixteen volunteer teachers who each meet regularly with a small group of students who have been targeted by the whole staff as needing special assistance. Each group follows a self esteem program of its own choice.

Smoking Cessation Program

In the belief that addiction to smoking amongst teenagers reflects a low self image and a surrender to peer group pressure, two programs have been run to give student smokers some assistance and encouragement in giving up smoking. The programs have been run by interested staff using assistance from curriculum officers from the Health Education Program.

LIAISON WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Brooks High School

A number of activities might be considered to overcome structural and organisational barriers to curriculum adaption and improvement and to develop positive student attitudes and teacher morale (including) arranging programs in junior secondary schools that flow naturally from those which pupils have experienced in primary schools with a view to easing the transition from primary to secondary school.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

We've all heard the stories the grade 6 children tell each other towards the end of their final year at primary school; 'The grade 10s stick your head down the toilet.' 'The teachers are real crabby at high school'. The high school teachers have their own story, too, about how wonderfully enthusiastic grade 7 students are when they first arrive; by grade 8 we generally expect this to have worn out somewhat. In amongst all these 'myths and stories' there is hidden a real problem; that the transition from grade 6 to 7 is often quite traumatic. In recognition of this, most high schools have developed programs in co-operation with their feeder primary schools which attempt to familiarise primary students with the high schools before they start their grade 7 year. For example, many schools are introducing the Peer Support Program.

Brooks High School has gone a little further than this in co-operation with its local primary schools – Mowbray Heights, Invermay, Mayfield and Rocherlea. They have set up a cluster intended to develop educational programs for the children in the area through resource sharing and co-operative curriculum development K-12.

Aims of the project

The project aims to:

- make the progress of children through its schools pleasant and rewarding by extending liaison between pre-schools, primary and secondary schools and secondary colleges;
- provide support for children and families with both short and long term needs by co-operation with welfare and educational support agencies;
- provide mutual support for teachers, parents and students through professional development and co-ordination of programs. This mutually supportive environment is to assist in the pursuit of a quality education for every child;
- promote a rise in participation and excellence which will reflect a stronger commitment to learning by the whole age group.

The cluster consists of a management group which is a co-ordinating body for sub-committees that conduct reviews and make recommendations for the management group to respond to and implement. It comprises a co-ordinator and representatives from the following:

Primary schools:
one representative and two early childhood representatives.

Brooks High School:
five representatives.

Parents:
five representatives.

Northern Regional Services:
three representatives.

A great deal of the original work for this project was supported by Brooks' Community Liaison Officer, Ruth Beecroft.

PEP funding has been provided for the cluster through Brooks High School, and in 1987 the cluster itself received an allocation from PEP. Most of the money has been spent on teacher relief. Early cluster meetings identified several areas where initiatives could be taken in the curriculum, perhaps the most important being mathematics and language.

John Sullivan is in charge of the mathematics initiatives for the cluster and worked on this full-time for most of 1987. In an effort to provide a continuum in 5-8 mathematics, he has identified the basic competencies which students will need to acquire over this four year period.

Initially, he established a rapport with the primary schools and developed a structure for discussing mathematics with the primary school teachers. It became clear that there was no continuity in the approach taken and the topics covered, so the high school and the primary school teachers met to identify a basic core of skills which would be required by the end of grade 6. John has spent most of this year preparing for publication a document which explains each of these core skills. The next step is to develop a similar document for grades 7 and 8 where a scope for each year group will be set out, building on the primary school document. For each topic in 7 and 8, skills will be identified; new and different material will be incorporated*; and criterion based assessment will be developed.

Although the result of this initiative might be seen as solely the production of new mathematics programs for the schools in the cluster, the effects have been wider than this. The process has been as valuable as the product because of the interaction which it has involved between the schools.

John has done some teaching in the primary schools and believes that it has been valuable for primary school students to get to know a high school teacher. He has benefitted himself from learning about the different organisation of the primary school day and seeing the individual attention the students are given. At the same time, the primary school teachers have visited the high school and made valuable comments about what they have seen there. This interchange of teachers has not been just in the mathematics area; it happens in other areas too as part of the general transition program.

In the language area, the cluster has taken up the *Pathways of Language Development* project. This is a project which identifies the steps which students take in their development of language. It calls for individual attention to students as they progress, and the provision of learning experiences which will assist children to reach further markers in their progress. It is a philosophy and a practical approach which has implications for all subject areas in high school. Language is seen as the basis for all learning, and so teachers need to become aware of how language develops and relate this knowledge to how they approach their subjects. A certain kind of teaching is called for, akin to that which is practised in primary schools. The sorts of changes which are required are closely related to Secondary Renewal.

It is difficult in an article such as this to explore fully a project like *Pathways*, but perhaps this extract from a draft paper produced by the Northern Language Arts Resource Centre provides an insight:

> Given the interdependence of language, thought and learning, teachers, in all fields of knowledge, must base the planned curriculum on proven principles and theories about language learning and learning through language ... What

* For example MCTP (Maths Curriculum Teaching Program) and RIME (Reality in Maths Education).

needs to be done is to shift the emphasis from content to competencies and processes.

As a member of the cluster, Brooks is attempting to introduce the *Pathways* approach in English and social science. This in turn will lead to the development of criterion based assessment in these two subjects in grades 7 and 8.

Several other areas have been identified by the cluster as areas where resource and information sharing can improve the quality of schooling. These include making links between the primary schools' environmental studies and the high school's outdoor education program; and developing a related arts program where the primary schools and the high school have an interchange of art and drama work.

Another interesting project is the manual arts direct experience program which was provided at Brooks in term 3, 1987, for all grade 6 students from Rocherlea Primary School. In groups of twenty the students each spent three afternoons at the high school doing some basic craft work. This gave them a chance to become familiar both with the school and with some of its teachers.

The Paths to Learning Cluster Project is spoken of with enthusiasm at Brooks High School by those who are involved in it. It is perceived as having broken down barriers between parents and schools and between the high school and the primary schools. It has created a climate whereby dialogue can take place and has led to a number of initiatives which can only benefit the pupils it is intended to serve.

Supporting teacher renewal

PEP guidelines from the Commonwealth take into account the importance of teacher development. In order to transmit to teachers new ideas and new methods it is vital that opportunities for seminars and workshops be provided.

A large number of programs which have taken place under PEP funding have involved some element of teacher development. A major component of the money used has been that spent on teacher relief. So, for instance, when St Helens District High School embarked on its school review, an element of that review involved teachers learning about the possibilities. Some programs however, have directly focussed on the question of teacher development; this has been a major thrust of the various cluster programs. One school in particular, Wynyard High School, has concentrated on a program which directly aims to improve teachers' classroom skills.

TEACHER DIRECT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Wynyard High School

Curriculum reform and development cannot be considered apart from the effectiveness of teachers. An ageing teaching force cannot prepare students for the future without opportunities for professional renewal. What is required in association with the Participation and Equity Program is the development of a policy of systematic and continuous teacher education.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

It is a busy day at Wynyard High School. Relief teachers are being briefed, last minute details are being sorted out, and as the school day starts, seven teachers withdraw to the nearby student hostel to spend the day taking part in a workshop as part of the Teacher Direct Assistance Program (TDAP).

TDAP has been devised and developed by John Macrostie, and was introduced to the school in 1985. Since then, a large number of teachers have benefited from the program which has been run by John and, in his absence, Nigel Stanley. The program has created a great deal of interest amongst other schools in the region and also in the United States, where John is at present, having been invited to lecture there on his theories and practices.

The following explanation of TDAP is based largely on a paper written by Nigel Stanley in 1987, and contains extracts from some of the booklets written by John Macrostie which make up the program. John has copyrighted the program, but has kindly allowed us to use some of his material.

The theory of experience on which TDAP is based can be paraphrased from what Dewey says in *Democracy in Education* (1916):

> Education is the continuous reorganisation and reconstruction of experience.

There is also an old Chinese proverb which says:

> 'When I hear, I forget; when I see, I remember; when I **do**, I **understand**.'

TDAP provides teachers with the opportunity to try something different in the classroom, provides an ongoing program over at least a year, and allows for interaction with other teachers. All this goes together to lead to internalisation, that is, developing different habits.

TDAP focuses on easily observable teaching behaviours and is based on research into what actually works in the classroom. Some aspects may be new or unfamiliar, but most importantly it integrates a diversity of good teaching practices, including those used intuitively by many exemplary teachers, and it leads to an understanding of why things work.

More specifically, TDAP has been designed to do the following.

1 Develop the awareness of teachers of a growing number of identifiable teaching behaviours and skills, which can lead to higher levels of student accomplishment.

2 Assist teachers in developing a conscious understanding of the impact of their specific teaching behaviours on the learning of their students, based on sound research and good theory.

3 Guide participants in changing the way they think about teaching to better enable them to:

a) stand back, fully 'look at' and comprehend a classroom problem;

b) generate possible alternative solutions;

c) develop a plan of action; and

d) implement the plan, with modifications when needed.

4 Provide participants with a set of concepts to facilitate development of a common teaching language to enhance communication and encourage interaction.

5 Promote the idea of a community of teachers within a school, who frequently meet to discuss teaching, and provide each of its members with assistance and mutual support when necessary.

6 Facilitate closing the gap between the actual teaching of participants, and the ideal teaching behaviours proposed in each work unit.

In practical terms, a group of five or six teachers will make up each workshop group, which will meet six times during the course of a year. An important element of these meetings is group acceptance and mutual encouragement. At the workshops, the participants begin by looking at one of the work units on teaching, of which there are six:

Communication clarity
Maintaining academic engaged time
Learning climate promotion
Approach diversity
Variability provision
Misbehaviour prevention

After studying one of the units and discussing it, participants then choose one aspect that they would like to implement in their own classrooms. Each has a partner at the workshop who will continue to support and encourage the new behaviour being tried. At some stage, the partner will be invited into the other teacher's classroom to observe the putting of the new ideas into practice. The cycle then continues with another workshop.

TDAP provides a balance between experience and reflection. It gives participants the opportunity to:

- plan and implement new ways of behaving in the classroom
- accept the role of peer supervisor or 'coach'
- take the role of workshop leader.

It does not attempt to tell teachers what to do, but rather what to consider. Because teachers set their own goals, what they learn from the program is directly relevant to their own needs and matches their prime concerns at a specific stage of their development, whatever that might be. Therefore, it can be useful for all teachers, not just those who are new or who might be seen to be at risk. The school believes that it has shown this to be a program which makes good teachers better.

This belief is borne out by testing participating teachers. An instrument, developed by David Hunt at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and which measures conceptual levels was used. Participants demonstrated an increase in their levels of thinking complexity, interpersonal maturity, and in understanding of themselves and others.

Teachers at Wynyard High School who have participated in the program are enthusiastic about its benefits, and at this stage more than half the staff have been part of TDAP. In addition to this, teachers from Murray High, Smithton High and Latrobe High have either participated or shown interest.

A CLUSTER APPROACH: SELF ESTEEM

The program will make funds available....to stimulate broadly-based changes in secondary education including.....changing and developing teacher attitudes and skills.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1984.

A central initiative under PEP was to set up a number of groups which would help develop teacher expertise in certain areas seen to be important in terms of the requirements of participation and equity. These cluster groups aimed to bring teachers from a large number of schools together in order to develop their understanding of the issues in question and to have them work as change agents in their schools. One such group was the self esteem cluster.

Self esteem for students first became an issue in this stage in 1982 when the *Wings* self esteem project for girls was set up as a special project with two part-time curriculum officers running seminars and initiating pilot programs in schools. *Wings* was received with much enthusiasm by the small group of teachers who participated, and when PEP funding commenced, there was already a pool of interested people. Since then, self esteem has been broadened to include boys as well as girls.

The self esteem cluster began at the start of 1986; it operates state wide and is autonomous in that it receives its own funding from the central PEP allocation, and makes its own decisions about how best to use this money. For most of the two years of its operation, the cluster has had a teacher as convenor. This convenor calls meetings, co-ordinates activities, organises guest speakers and generally makes sure that the cluster operates smoothly. As well as the convenor there is a centrally located self esteem project officer who acts as counsellor and resource person.

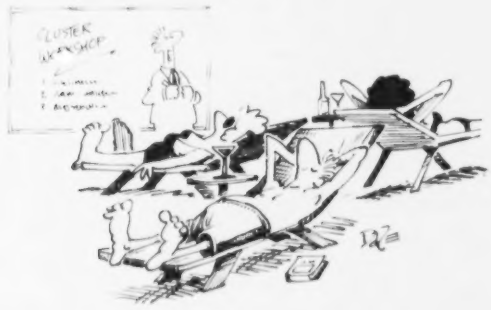
The cluster is made up of three regional groups; North, North-West and South. Each year there are two regional meetings for each area, two state meetings and a two-day state conference. In 1987, there were 31 schools involved in the cluster; this included teachers from special schools, high and district high schools and secondary colleges. Not all of the participants belong to target schools. Other schools have received funds from PEP to allow teachers to attend, while PEP target schools provide relief from their own PEP resources. This is seen as a way of allowing some schools which missed out on being targeted to receive funds and therefore to participate in the program.

Cluster meetings are day-long meetings, usually held in the region's teachers' centre, and a variety of activities take place. Firstly, the group believes that the best way to learn about teaching self esteem is to experience for themselves what they are planning to do with students. Consequently the day always contains self esteem activities which they can also use with their students. Resource sharing is an important element; teachers bring along materials on the theory and practice of self esteem in schools which they have found to be particularly useful. They share new ideas and strategies. They talk about the things that are happening in their schools and the problems they are having, and discuss possible solutions.

The meetings have also provided a forum for a number of guest speakers who have provided information on such topics as the change process in schools, conflict resolution and problem solving. Some of the schools which have adopted the Peer Support Program have been introduced to that program through the cluster. From the meetings, too, came the idea of a newsletter. Produced monthly in a bright and appealing format, it includes material on self esteem theory and school news; it points to research and to new materials available; and it describes strategies for teaching self esteem. This was seen to be a particularly important resource for people who were not able to attend cluster meetings, and a good way of increasing

the awareness in schools of the importance of self esteem.

Many of the teachers who have participated in the cluster have been instrumental in introducing self esteem programs into their schools. These vary from short programs run by small number of teachers to whole school projects to make the development of self esteem central to the educational program in the school (see the article on Rokeby, page 13)



Members of the cluster have often felt that they were fighting a difficult battle in having self esteem accepted in their schools. They have met resistance, they feel, often because there are still many teachers who feel uncomfortable about taking self esteem sessions. However, the fact that there has been PEP money available, and that the cluster exists, has made their task much easier. The availability of money and system support for their philosophies has validated their efforts.

With the cessation of PEP funding in 1987, there is a possibility that the cluster will not continue into 1988, although other avenues of funding are being explored. Much has been achieved though. A large number of individual teachers have changed and developed their own practices, and self esteem is widely accepted in schools. PEP has made possible three important steps towards introducing change in the system:

broad awareness;
the setting up of lighthouse programs; and
general acceptance throughout the system.

Now, within Secondary Renewal, a major focus is the creation of supportive social environments in schools. The work of innovation in self esteem programs will be vital in this process of renewal.

The cluster members believe that an important contribution to the ongoing success of affective education in schools will be to make sure that teachers are aware of the resources that are available. Consequently, they have decided to produce a bibliography of self esteem resources which they have found useful. This will be available on the computer-based *Tasmanian Resources Review*, and it is hoped that, because it will contain material held in a large number of the 31 member schools, it will be quite a comprehensive bibliography.

A CLUSTER APPROACH: ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

The new program will require the development of more diverse and useful credentialling procedures and measures of student achievement. This will be necessary to the development of a broad, general school curriculum which goes beyond the narrowly 'academic' or 'vocational' in its provision for all students.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

The result of the PEP Alternative Assessment Cluster has been the publication of a book, *Have We Failed Them?* describing some of the experiences of the cluster members. Rather than attempt to describe the wide range of activities that have taken place as a result of the cluster, the contents page has been reproduced here, along with some comments by Lucy Fisher, the cluster convenor.

Have We Failed Them? is our cluster publication for 1986-87.

In some ways we believe we have failed our students. By carrying out assessment to serve the needs of those outside the education system and by ranking students for selection purposes, we have not provided them with the feedback they need to help them learn.

For many students the failure syndrome has been so pervasive that it has led to disenchantment and loss of motivation. Teachers commented that they'd seen students give up or become disruptive. For other students the rank ordering has led to mediocrity; bright students not even trying because they know they'll get an A anyway.

Faced with these problems and many others we set out to examine methods of assessment that provide ongoing feedback to students while they are learning.

The publication is a collection of teachers' accounts of experiments they carried out in their own classrooms, within their subject departments and across the whole school.

The book includes the following articles:

- 'Peer Assessment, Self Assessment of Personal Qualities and Reference Writing', Charles Morgan, Rokeby High.
- 'Re-assessment: Reviewing Assessment in the English Department', Lynne Collidge, Ravenswood High.
- 'Assessment in Art', Elaine Bennett, Taroona High.
- 'Anecdotal Records', David Moult, Sorell District High.
- 'Australian Short Stories: Alternative Assessment or the Clayton's Form of Assessment', Ian Johnston, Taroona High.
- 'The Case-Book: An Alternative to Graded Assessment of Essays', Graeme Kirkwood, Elizabeth College.
- 'Children...These are my Jewels', Anne Stevenson, Deloraine High.
- 'Reflection, Review, Proposed Action in the Social Science Department', Rod Howell, Ravenswood High
- 'Assessing Learning in Junior Mathematics: An Alternative Approach', Ian MacPherson, Taroona High
- 'Using Criterion Based Assessment at Brooks High', Di Henning and Greg Morgan, Brooks High.
- 'Record Keeping', Jacquie Frew, Curriculum Officer
- 'Self-Assessment', Lucy Fisher, Curriculum Officer.

Copies of the book should be available in all schools and colleges early in 1988.

Improving access to senior secondary colleges

A major focus of PEP has been to improve retention rates. The Commonwealth Schools Commission states that

> the object of increased participation rests on the principle that all young people have an equal entitlement to full secondary schooling or its equivalent (*Participation and Equity in Australian Schools*, 1983, p12).

Nevertheless, PEP is not simply about keeping students on at school past the post-compulsory years; it is also about making sure that a quality education which is relevant to **all** students and their needs is provided.

This section then looks at an example of how high schools can encourage their students to continue their education past grade 10; it looks at the provision of an alternative type of senior secondary college; and it examines some of the ways in which senior secondary colleges are attempting to attract and provide for a broader range of students than was previously the case.

AN ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Rosebery District High School

Co-operative efforts will also be encouraged to clear existing paths and create new ones between schools and the broad range of educational training and employment opportunities existing beyond the school. This will require closer co-operation between schools, TAFE colleges, colleges of advanced education, universities and all other agencies with responsibilities for educating young people.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Common to almost all schools which have received PEP funding are programs to encourage students to continue their schooling past the compulsory years. These programs take the form of developing close ties with senior secondary colleges and in many cases of providing the students with direct experience at the colleges. Several schools have addressed the fact that students often make their choices at an early stage of their schooling, and that an understanding of the educational options beyond year 12 leads to more informed decision making. One of these schools is Rosebery District High.

A district high school is in a particularly difficult position when it comes to improving retention rates (see the article on Oatlands, p 30). There are problems such as distance, community attitudes and the expense of accommodation. Until a few years ago the question of continuing past grade 10 hardly arose in Rosebery as there was virtually full employment in the district. The HEC and the EZ Mining Company employed all but one or two per cent of young people as soon as they finished grade 10. When Geoff Jay, the teacher in charge of this area, arrived at the school in 1977, no students at all were continuing their education past grade 10. However, employment opportunities have worsened in the last few years. Along with this, there is also a conscious school acknowledgement that with the changing nature of technology and society there is a need for an increased percentage of students to continue their education past grade 10. In order to give purpose and direction to students' choices, Rosebery District High has also included an exploration of educational opportunities beyond year 12. Their policy document states

> Because of our isolation, there is a lack of awareness of professional employment and training institutions - HSC and Technical Colleges, the State Institute of Technology and the University. (p56)

In order to address these problems, Rosebery has developed a program which spans years 6-10.

Grade 6

During their final primary school year at Rosebery District High School and its feeder schools, all students are taken on a one-day excursion to Burnie so that they can visit the Burnie Technical College and Hellyer College. The main aim of this journey is to broaden horizons and make the students aware that these places exist and to allow them to see that the colleges are not frightening but interesting and exciting places.

Grade 8

All grade 8 students spend another day in Burnie. This time the tours are more specific. Each student chooses two areas of interest to investigate at Burnie Technical College during the morning. In the afternoon they are again taken to Hellyer, where they look around, watch a video, and talk about what it is like to

attend the college and what this can lead to. This first hand experience is considered to be crucial so that students can make informed option choices for grades 9 and 10.

Grade 10

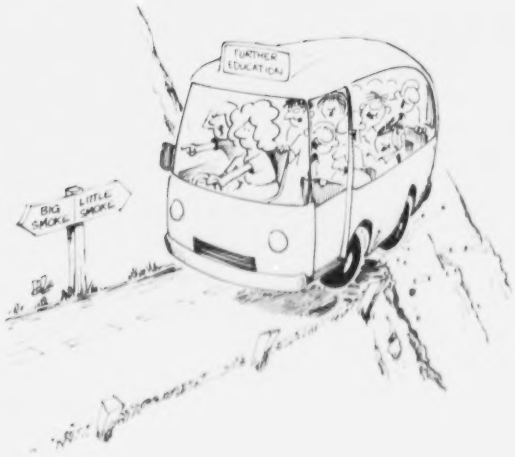
During this year, a one-week, state-wide tour is organised. Students are taken to Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. Visits are made to the University of Tasmania, the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology, and the Maritime College, as well as to secondary colleges other than Hellyer to which students might go, and TAFE colleges which offer courses not available in Burnie. There are also visits to employers to illustrate what some of these courses might lead to.

For the first time in 1987, grade 10 students had, at the end of this week, a chance to sit in on one and a half days of lessons at Hellyer College.

This whole process is seen as valuable not only because of the visits themselves, but also because of the level of effort and informed decision-making required from students who must select where to go, what to see and what classes to attend.

This series of visits is backed up by a number of other initiatives at the school. They include:

- class activities in grade 7 to explore abilities, interests and skills allied to career information;
- a series of courses for grades 8 and 10 students entitled 'Transition Education';



- a grade 10 work experience program; and
- a bi-annual careers information day which is attended by students from grades 6 to 10 during school time, and open to parents and students in the evening.

All aspects of education at Rosebery District High are covered by the school's *Policy Handbook*, a special document produced each year. Each policy contained in the *Handbook* is the result of careful planning by the school's elected Council, comprising parents, teachers and students. This document contains the policies on the school's transition and post grade 10 programs. Having such policies is seen by the school as giving purpose and direction to its attempts to improve retention rates. Given the results, a 44 per cent retention to year 11 and TAFE in 1986-87, which is well above the State average, who can argue with them?

COMMUNITY COLLEGE CENTRE

Oatlands District High School

Funding is to be provided for assistance to particular schools to increase participation by groups now under-represented in the final years of secondary schooling and in the full range of post-school educational and employment options.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Retention rates at Oatlands District High School

1985-6 : 29%
1986-7 : 61%

Q. *Why the dramatic increase in the number of students from grade 10 at Oatlands District High School going on to grade 11?*

A. *The establishment of a Community College Centre at Oatlands.*

Over the last four years, a number of Tasmanian schools have shown a gradual improvement in their retention rates. This is due to concerted efforts, often funded by PEP, to encourage their students to continue past year 10. Oatlands' answer, along with Triabunna, St Marys and Smithton, was to set up a special section in the school which would provide year 11 classes for students wishing to continue their education without leaving home. It was seen that rural students have particular difficulties in attending city colleges:

- it is expensive
- close family ties prevent students from leaving home
- city life, city colleges and city people often intimidate country students who would prefer to stay in their own communities.

Some of these concerns about rural students became clear at a number of meetings set up between a Rosny College committee and several district high schools during 1984. At the same time, Eleanor Gregg, a teacher at Oatlands District High School was completing her study about the need for year 11 courses in the town. Rosny College provided the support and eventually helped two schools, Oatlands and Triabunna, to set up annexes.

At the beginning of 1985, year 11 courses commenced at Oatlands, with a full-time co-ordinator made available from senior secondary staffing, while other funds for the centre were provided by PEP. Eleanor Gregg became the co-ordinator, on the staff of Rosny College, but based at Oatlands. She organised part-time teachers and teachers from the high school to take classes in the year 11 centre. She taught some of her lessons in the centre, and some in the high school in order to release other teachers for the centre.

The accommodation for the centre is not grand. It consists of two rooms and a corridor in the Oatlands Adult Education building, which is a short walk from the high school. Eleanor believes that it is important to have separate accommodation; it allows her to develop a climate for the development of self-reliance and maturity where students are able to take responsibility for their own learning, and where she can foster the development of a group identity. One room contains the radio equipment for lessons from Rosny College (child development and human biology this year) as well as the computer, blackboards, desks and chairs. The other room has a table and chairs where Eleanor takes her small group. This room also doubles as the art room.

While this accommodation was adequate in 1985 for the seven full-time students, it is a little crowded now with seventeen full-time and fifteen part-time students.

As the centre's enrolments have increased, so have the number of subjects being offered. Alth. ugh all subjects this year are being taken at level 2, last year three level 3 subjects were successfully completed: art, human biology and twentieth century history. This year's subjects are:

mathematics	community studies
English	biology
social psychology	child development
home management	rural science

As well as these daytime offerings, the centre has computer studies and woodwork as evening classes.

An important part of the weekly routine is the Monday morning double period which is used as home group time. At this time the centre's students get together to work out any common problems; to plan trips to places like TSIT or Rosny College, for example; or to play sport. The centre has had teams in local basketball and badminton rosters.

In the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the centre, I chatted to a number of the students. They were friendly and open, obviously responding well to the trust and freedom they are given by Eleanor. Most of the students I spoke to were attending for the same sorts of reasons:

'Mum wanted me to.'
'I wasn't confident enough to leave home.'
'There were no jobs.'

One of the mature age students is a twenty-nine year old mother of four. She began at the centre last year out of boredom, and is now working towards the necessary prerequisites for a Bachelor of Business degree at the TSIT.

Another student has a father whose job means the family has to move around a great deal. The centre has meant that she has not missed a year of schooling despite being in a small country town for that year.

Interestingly, a couple of students who were at the centre because they did not feel they were ready to leave home are now keen to move away and start something new; a job in the city, or further education. They themselves feel they have grown up a lot while at the centre. Many previous students have been successful in finding work, some in the city. Several have completed year 11 at the centre and gone on to the year 12 at one of the colleges; Rosny or Elizabeth.

The centre is not meant to replace the larger colleges. Students at Oatlands District High School are still encouraged to consider continuing their education at Rosny or one of the other colleges. However, there is now an alternative for those students who simply would not have been able to go to the city; for those who are dubious about continuing school; or for those who want to return to education after some years out of it. From the number of students who have taken advantage of this alternative, it seems that the setting up of Oatlands Community College Centre has been a popular move in this small community.

THE SENIOR SECONDARY COLLEGE RESPONSE

A fundamental assumption in these objectives is that Australia should continue to progress towards the goal of universal participation in secondary education. Underlying this is the conviction that full secondary education, or an appropriate equivalent, is intrinsically valuable.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Senior secondary colleges in Tasmania are in an enviable position when it comes to co-ordinating their activities. There are only seven colleges in the State, and consequently they have been able to work closely together in addressing the issues of participation and equity. Recognising this at the early stages of the availability of PEP funding, colleges developed the approach of making a joint submission for funding. In 1987, this became a submission for PEP funds and funds from the Resource Agreement Program (RAP) under its special initiative number three, 'Increased Participation of Disadvantaged Groups'.

The 1987 joint submission states:

> While each secondary college will have its own component of the overall program this joint submission is being made because past experience in this area has shown that such co-operative endeavours are more efficient and more successful than isolated activities in working towards these college priorities.

There are two main thrusts to the colleges' program. One is to dramatically increase the number of students continuing their education beyond year 10, and the other is to develop appropriate curricula for educationally disenchanted and non-academic students so that greater numbers of these students are encouraged to complete the full six years of secondary education.

Increasing Retention Rates

Tasmania, in comparison with the rest of Australia, suffers from a low year 10 to 11 retention rate. In response to this, the colleges have established programs to improve liaison between high school and secondary college communities and to give better pre-enrolment counselling to students. Efforts have been made to counsel and advise students throughout their high school years, and students have been given the opportunity to visit colleges for 'taster' programs. The liaison program has also worked at familiarising parents and high school teachers and principals with college programs.

As a result of these concerted efforts, an improvement has been seen in retention rates. Figures show that the rate has risen from 42% in 1984 to 54.2% in 1986. Schools in isolated areas and in low socio-economic areas have markedly increased their retention rates.

Curriculum Changes

It is important to recognise that if a broader range of students is to attend the colleges, then there must be appropriate courses supplied. The old level three 'academic' courses are often not relevant for students who have had only moderate success in their high school years. There must be a diversity of courses, especially practical courses, to cater for this changing clientele. Along with developing new courses, colleges have also addressed the issues of developing teaching methods and assessment procedures more appropriate for the identified groups than traditional practices.

Although all colleges have in common these overall aims, it is important to recognise that each college is very different, and so the way each one has identified priorities and gone about developing programs is unique to the particular campus. All the colleges have

introduced new curriculum offerings and all the colleges have run liaison programs but it may be of interest to have some examples how various colleges have tackled particular aspects of these programs.

Alanvale College

One of Alanvale's initiatives has been to mount an intensive campaign in relation to its source high school, Brooks. A particularly low retention rate (25.8% in 1985/86) has now increased to 36%. The program was started with PEP funding late in term 3, 1985.

Various strategies have been employed by Alanvale at Brooks:

- Small group discussions were held with students who had indicated that they were not expecting to enrol in HSC courses. These were run by two mature age ex-students of Alanvale, and the main aim was information sharing.
- The 'big brother/sister' scheme gave an opportunity to those high school students who wished to be escorted by an ex-Brooks student of their choice for a whole day at Alanvale. This proved to be a popular and effective way of familiarising high school students with Alanvale.
- Talks were given to parent groups at their request. This was seen to be important in helping to change parental attitudes towards continuing education.
- A video was made on student life at Alanvale for distribution to all its source schools. The video features a student narrator and attempts to familiarise students with life at the college, particularly social life, and the attitudes and thoughts of students there.
- A team of teachers from Alanvale visited Brooks to enrol students in HSC courses. This meant that students did not have to face the often difficult task of going through enrolments at college, which is sometimes a stumbling block in continuing their studies.

These five initiatives were so successful in 1986 that they were extended and developed in 1987 under different funding arrangements. The college believes that they have been able to achieve better retention rates because they have worked so closely with the high school in encouraging students to continue their studies.

Don College

PACAGE (Progressively Assessed Course in Alternative General Education) was Don College's first response to the requirements of PEP. Having provided these alternative courses the college staff found that they were working so well that an even wider range of students was being attracted. They were faced with the need to make provision for students who had taken largely level 1 courses at high school. Hence the 'Six Pack' was developed.

Six Pack was introduced in 1987 and consisted of six units, three making up a subject, so that a student who successfully completed all six units would gain two School Certificate subjects. The most important aspect of Six Pack was that it was flexible because it was dealing with a variety of students, some of whom could almost be categorised as school refusers. The two staff members involved saw their role as taking the students 'under the wing' to some extent, so that although a wide range of units was taken by the students, teachers approached the courses in a very flexible way, allowing for individual student needs. Units taken were maths studies, communication and language, biology and you (with a strong element of self esteem for girls), art and child development. The Six Pack units were taught not only at the college but also in an old Education Department house in Sprent; this allowed for the units to have a very practical bias.

Don College intends to continue the Six Pack course in 1988. However, the title is now seen as a label for the students taking it and in 1988 the course will be called Planning for Living in an attempt to remove any stigma.

Elizabeth College

A project aimed at increasing the participation rates of girls in science and technology subjects was conducted by Elizabeth College in conjunction with Ogilvie High School. Girls from the high school took part in a ten week, one hour a week 'taster' course in three subjects at the college; geology, physics and drawing and design, all three of which had previously had very poor enrolments from girls. The aim was to show girls that the subjects were relevant to them, both in a broad educational sense and as possible career paths.

Of the ten sessions of geology, six were spent in the classroom, one outside in the school grounds, two on excursions and one on discussion of careers. During this last session,

Ms Carol Bacon, one of Tasmania's leading geologists, spoke to the class.

Some of the girls attended a physics/electronics class during the program. The main focus of the lessons was on radioactivity, which was linked to a number of social issues such as nuclear power, nuclear waste, nuclear weapons, food irradiation and the effects of radiation on health. The girls participated in experiments and discussion, and showed a high level of interest.

In drawing and design, the students were introduced to the various areas covered by the subject and then given a choice of projects to undertake. Some designed a holiday shack, some drew patterns for flared and a straight skirt while others designed a travel brochure. The sessions aimed to teach some of the concepts of drawing and design through tapping into the girls' interests.

There is general agreement that the program has increased girls' understanding of and enthusiasm for these subjects which have typically been a male preserve. The students responded extremely well to the way the subjects were related to people issues, and enrolments from girls have consequently increased markedly in these areas. For instance after the first year of the drawing and design taster course for girls, there were six enrolments from the group the following year, a six hundred per cent increase.

Launceston Community College (LCC)

In 1986, the college submitted plans for a scheme to give students with special needs the opportunity to embark on grade 11 studies. By February, 1987, the college had funded a full-time teacher, allocated the old library building as a teaching area, and enrolled ten students in a unit entitled 'Personal Literacy Program' (PLP). PEP funds were used for resources and support materials.

The program is designed for students with physical and learning disabilities who can cope with level 2 or level 3 HSC studies with assistance. Student handicaps include hearing impairment, dyslexia, paraplegia, vision impairment and incapacitating diseases.

Since integration and participation are the main aims of the program, each student studies at least two mainstream subjects. Pastoral care and special help are provided in a core curriculum of up to three subjects and a class advisor group run by the PLP teacher. Within this core, students do units from the existing HSC syllabus. Teaching methods are adapted to cater for individual needs. There is a definite emphasis on learning by doing, building confidence in practical, real-life situations and, above all, self esteem. Students also participate in the college recreation and elective programs.

The success of the program is already apparent, with progress being shown in academic, social and personal areas. Some students have enrolled in further mainstream units. The group has successfully organised social events for the college parents and friends executive and the student representative council. The group has also participated in establishing its own fully equipped kitchen and individuals have taken part in the college's fun run. A small business venture making and selling health food bars has been successful.

Rosny College

Staff from the general studies department at Rosny spent a great deal of time during 1987 visiting students at their local high schools; Geilston Bay, Clarence, Rokeby and Warrane High Schools and Sorell District High. The meetings were always with very small groups of students to facilitate communication. In the past, the college has designed courses and then used school visits to sell these courses to prospective students; the difference this year is that they talk to the students in as much detail as possible about their needs and expectations so that appropriate courses can be supplied.

Several important points have emerged from these meetings. One is that students are particularly interested in doing practical, life skills subjects. Another is that, because of moves towards unitisation in high schools, students are very familiar with the ideas of unitisation, and discerning about how they need to make their choices.

Rosny has had units available on a wide range of topics since 1979 but it is only now that they are being used properly, as a way of ensuring flexibility and choice. The students' input is ensuring that the appropriate units are offered. The college is also giving students of lesser ability the chance to continue a unit for as long as it takes to finish it successfully. This is facilitated by taking unit enrolments every ten weeks; if students have not completed a unit at the end of this time, they do not pass or fail, but simply re-enrol.

An important aspect of the offerings for lower

ability students is that those taking them are no longer identified as 'PEP kids'. In the past, such students worked on completely different timetables, but now, even when doing a whole unitised course, they are on the same lines as all the other students. This allows them to participate in mid-session electives and to socialise with other students. They are still identified by the college, but the only different treatment that they receive is in extra counselling about course choices and coping with study.

Hobart College

In 1984, Hobart College formed a liaison committee with its associated high schools, with one representative from each high school and one from the college, the latter being the chairperson. However, it was not until the group became a PEP cluster in 1985 that activities were really stepped up. The members were no longer hindered by financial difficulties, having money for teacher relief and travel. The system support created a more workable atmosphere for the members too, and rather than the college being viewed as the patron, all members felt that they had equal status.

One of the major issues facing the committee was curriculum continuity from high school to college, between school and college, and also between high schools. In order to deal with this issue, a number of across-curriculum conferences were held as well as some smaller, subject-based conferences. During 1987, the committee has focussed on an intensive familiarisation program for high school teachers. This means that these teachers have a soundly-based knowledge of the college, and so are able to promote the college more often and more effectively.

The liaison committee has a number of advantages. It improves understanding between the schools and the college, and the schools have often found that individual problems they have experienced have been solved through discussion with the committee. The committee is a useful sounding board for ideas, and is important to the college liaison officer in that it helps her to determine the schools' needs, and hence, to determine her role.

The high school representatives have also had the opportunity, through lunch time meetings, to make contact with large numbers of their ex-students, which has given extremely valuable feedback to these teachers. The students are able to give advice about what information would have been helpful to them before they went to college.

The liaison committee is excited about its role. As a long-standing group, it feels that the elements of trust, frankness and group solidarity established in its operations contribute to its effectiveness.

Improving opportunities for special groups

Equity is about making sure that those groups which might suffer disadvantage in their education are fully catered for. Often this requires special provision for those students – aborigines, girls, migrants, disabled children and those from working class backgrounds – who have in the past been excluded from a fully rewarding and useful education.

For some time now, there has been a growing awareness amongst educators of the need to cater for these students. There have been Commonwealth programs like the Country Areas Project, English as a Second Language and Priority Projects. The Tasmanian Education Department has for a long period provided education officers and committees to ensure that the needs of special groups are taken into account.

With the introduction of PEP, there has been an injection of funds to further boost these moves towards equity in education.

GIRLS AND COMPUTERS

Flinders Island District High School

The social climate in which young people are growing up today differs in many respects from a generation ago....These changes are occurring along with profound economic and technological changes which in themselves have widespread social and educational implications. This has produced a confused situation for all secondary schools and their students, with young people from the least influential sections of our society tending to fare worst.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Flinders Island District High School has a small secondary enrolment of approximately fifty students, a fact which perhaps makes it easier than in a large high school to introduce programs aimed at improving equity for a specific group of students. The staff decided in 1985 that an area for action should be girls and computers. It seems to be a general rule that boys are more likely to become interested in computing than girls and it is a common sight at lunch times in our high schools to see the computer rooms full of boys. They might only be playing computer games, but the easy familiarity they develop with the computers during these informal sessions must have a bearing on their approach to computer studies as a subject option, and no one would deny that a knowledge of computers is an important aspect of present day life and work. It was decided at Flinders Island that a special program should be undertaken to increase girls' access to and understanding of computers.

This decision emerged as part of a school review in 1985 which explored better ways of using time and teacher expertise than the traditional splitting of grade 9 and 10 into four basic subjects and three options. It is necessary to look briefly at what happened as a result of this review in order to see where the girls' program fits in. With such a small school, the old method meant that class sizes were often impracticably small and offerings were limited. Consequently, a new arrangement was made for grades 7 to 10.

Each morning from Monday to Thursday, students spend the time before recess studying English and social science, or maths and science. This is referred to as block time. After lunch, students do block time again, taking the two subjects they did not do in the morning. The time between recess and lunch is used for what are referred to as intensive courses. All day Friday is spent on the intensive courses.

The courses cover a wide variety of topics and are offered according to staff interest and expertise. Each course lasts for five or six weeks, and is certificated as a short course. Although it is possible for students to use a combination of these courses to make up a School Certificate subject, the school's main aim is to provide a wide range of offerings so that students experience a broad range and are not disadvantaged by being in a small school. A list of the courses offered in 1987 is interesting:

- water safety/first aid
- needlework
- computers and keyboarding
- woodwork
- sports coaching
- stained glass for beginners
- home entertainment and cooking
- painting and drawing
- garment design
- metalwork
- botanical illustration
- school production
- cake decorating and special occasion cookery.
- drama and expression
- catering
- welding and cutting
- electronics

- leather work
- school newspaper
- rural science
- cottage crafts
- photography and video
- watercolour painting

Some of the more popular of these were offered more than once during the year.

This intensive course time, then, was the ideal time to introduce the special computer program for girls. During 1986, every girl in the high school participated at some stage in a computers and keyboarding unit which was available only to girls. Each course catered for from eight to twelve students from the four grades, and used the school's five computers and a number of typewriters to assist in the teaching of computer and keyboard skills. The course outline describes the course's minimum attainment requirements:

At the conclusion of the course the student should be able to

- set up the computer, disk drive and printer
- use a variety of computer programs (software)
- use the word processor to create, edit and print his/her own stories, letters and essays
- get information from a data base
- create a data base
- send and receive messages through electronic mail (modem)
- receive news via AAP (modem)
- demonstrate a sound knowledge of both the computer and the typewriter keyboard
- use the typewriter for personal and business letter composition
- use the computer or the typewriter to aesthetically display written work.

Computers and keyboarding has been taught by part-time teacher Judy Bowman, who used to teach typing, but believed that the emphasis should be shifted towards present day technology. She is funded partly by PEP. The course is run very much on a negotiated basis which allows for the individual needs of the students, and is another example of how a PEP project has already taken account of some of the requirements of secondary renewal.

During 1986, computers and keyboarding has been offered five times, but this year it has been available to mixed classes. The rationale behind this is that all girls from grades 7 to 10 were given the special classes the year before, which gave them a great deal of confidence and expertise which they have carried over to this year's classes. Grade 7 girls who took the classes in mixed groups in 1987 had the rest of the girls in the school as role models; the special classes in 1986 assured an equal status for girls in the computer room. Judy has seen the girls become extremely proficient in their handling of computers. Recess and lunch times now provide a very different picture with the computer room no longer the boys' domain.

GIRLS IN EDUCATION: A CLUSTER APPROACH

So, while girls are advantaged in their access to schooling for its own sake, quite irrespective of its outcomes in terms of direct reward or status, the 'cultural dowry' approach to schooling for girls has contributed to women's economic dependence and its social and political consequences.

Commonwealth Schools Commission
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

San Fitzgibbon, the convenor of the self esteem cluster, believes that a great deal has been achieved in equal opportunity for girls through the PEP cluster which began in 1986, and has reached fifty five people from fifteen schools over two years. Although teachers in the cluster often said they felt they hadn't done much to achieve large scale change in their school, San has been able to look at the collective experience and see that through subtle, small changes, a great deal has been achieved. The cluster method has been a way of drawing in teachers who would otherwise have no access to in-servicing in gender equity issues. While one-off in-service offerings in this area do not attract vast numbers, the cluster system has worked because it has continuity, formal status within the system, and yet retains the feeling of a supportive network.

Members were drawn together for three meetings each year during 1986 and 1987. Schools were asked to send two people to each meeting, and this generally happened. Meetings included general awareness sessions through guest speakers, videos, workshops and activities; sharing of experience in individual schools; resource viewing; and strategy planning. The first year saw one one-day meeting per term. In the second year there were two-day residential meetings at a halfway meeting point between Hobart and Launceston and a final one-day meeting. The advantage of the residential meetings was that they cut down on travelling, thus allowing time for people to really study the issues. Before meetings pre-reading was sent out, with a PEP cluster newsletter sent afterwards. In between meetings, San visited the participants to discuss progress and provide support.

Teachers attended the cluster for a variety of reasons, the main two being, firstly, that they wanted to see what other schools were doing about gender equity so that they could take action themselves; and secondly, a feeling of personal or professional commitment to the issues. Initial interest was largely related to the two issues of subject choice, mainly maths and science; and careers choice. This remained so for most of the participants over the two years.

In the second year, most people still wanted to pursue these issues, but there was also a demand for devising ways to influence colleagues in their schools.

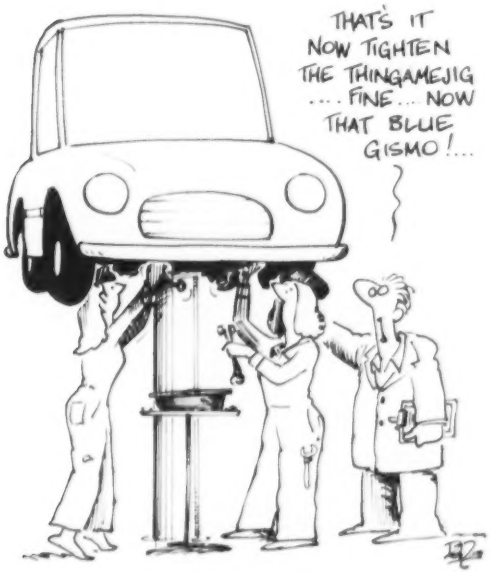
The situation that San often found in the cluster schools was that while some large programs had been run, in most schools small changes added up to a program of action. For instance, some cluster participants had spoken with other teachers in their staffrooms; they had run equal opportunity videos in pastoral care groups; maths, science, English and social science teachers had joined seminars and groups working for gender equity in those subjects; the counsellor had become more aware of girls' careers and subject choice; and inclusive language had been demanded in a school's statement of educational objectives. In short a great deal of progress was being made.

However, only two schools felt that the issue of equal opportunity had been widely accepted, with most participants believing only that the major changes occurred for the individuals who attended the cluster. The generally small group of sympathetic teachers in schools who were modifying their approach in the classroom or in the organisation of specific school programs also reflected successful change.

The sorts of changes which individual teachers were able to effect mainly involved classroom interaction, including time given and eye

contact. Harnessing girls' interests became a priority; for instance, in science, one teacher looked carefully at his choice of topics, while another was asking for and valuing creative writing as well as report writing. Many teachers were avoiding stereotyping by using balanced numbers of female and male examples in their teaching, by using inclusive language and by purchasing novels which showed more varied female role models.

Five schools managed to establish support groups or committees for equal opportunity, and two in particular used these most successfully. One set up a girls' self-defence program; showed the video, *Classroom Dynamics* to staff; had some teachers do surveys of interaction in their classes; established successful liaison with the curriculum committees; and proposed and had accepted a school policy on gender equity. The other school had a number of goals it was interested in pursuing, but centred activity around the running of a careers session involving women and all grade 8 girls.



There is good news for teachers who are interested in gender equity and who wish to read about projects which have worked in other schools. The cluster members have contributed articles about their experiences which have been published under the title *Girls in Education*. It is highly recommended reading and its table of contents is reproduced below:

Curriculum and gender: investigating choice
Exeter High School - subject investigation
Jobs for the boys/girls? A survey
Subject survey
Helping kids choose
Career choices of chemistry students

Changing the curriculum
Work and daily life
Grade 8 girls' career afternoon
Boys will be boys
A girls midtime program
Sexual harassment session: grade 10 girls
X day report
Self-defence classes for girls
Girls/boys and sexuality
Attitudes and values: single sex lessons

Humanities
Famous women
Girls, boys and jobs: a social science unit
Women's studies unit
HSC English
Women and literature

Maths, science and technology
Mothers and daughters computer evening
Maths lesson with a difference
Introductory geology
HSC physics taster course
Teaching and assessment in HSC chemistry
Computer use at Warrane High
Engineering pamphlet: increasing awareness

Physical activity
A fairy tale (part 1)
Weight training for girls
Playground use - Sorell District High School
Girls and soccer
Self-defence
No spare rib
Football skills for girls

School life
A study of assemblies
School assemblies - observer report
Bird's eye-view

Bringing about change
'I have nearly climbed that mountain'
Science teaching and girls
Change and school environment
Secondary education and girls
Setting up a school committee
Maintaining a committee
How to develop a policy statement
Strategies for working with parents and students
Using surveys

Resources
Selected resources reviewed
Contacts for equal opportunity
Video list

HOMEWORK CENTRES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

...special measures will be necessary to overcome the barriers to full and equal participation by girls, students from disadvantaged socio-economic groups, Aborigines, students from non-English speaking backgrounds and others for whom secondary provision has been inequitable. Co-operative efforts will be needed to explore further the nature of the disadvantages such students are facing; to increase awareness of how these can be overcome; and to provide the support and resources necessary for remedial action.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

A special area of PEP funding has been the allocation of funds to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Advisory Council (TAEAC) so that the council may make provisions to redress educational disadvantages amongst Aboriginal students in Tasmania. During the years of PEP funding the council has initiated a number of programs. They have addressed such issues as the lack of suitable educational materials for Aboriginal students, and the particular problems of Aboriginal girls, who are often doubly disadvantaged because of gender as well as race. This article describes a particularly interesting project – the setting up of homework centres throughout the state.

In each of the state's three regions, TAEAC established parent groups, and it was the parent group in the north-west which came up with the idea of providing venues after school hours where students could do extra work and be assisted with any learning difficulties. Subsequently, four study centres have been set up in the State. There is one in Queenstown which operates from the CYSS centre; one in Burnie in the Acton community centre; one in Devonport located in a detached classroom at the East Devonport Primary School; and one in Launceston which operates at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association (TACCA) centre. The Devonport, Queenstown and Launceston centres are open twice weekly for two hours, and the Burnie centre once weekly for two hours.

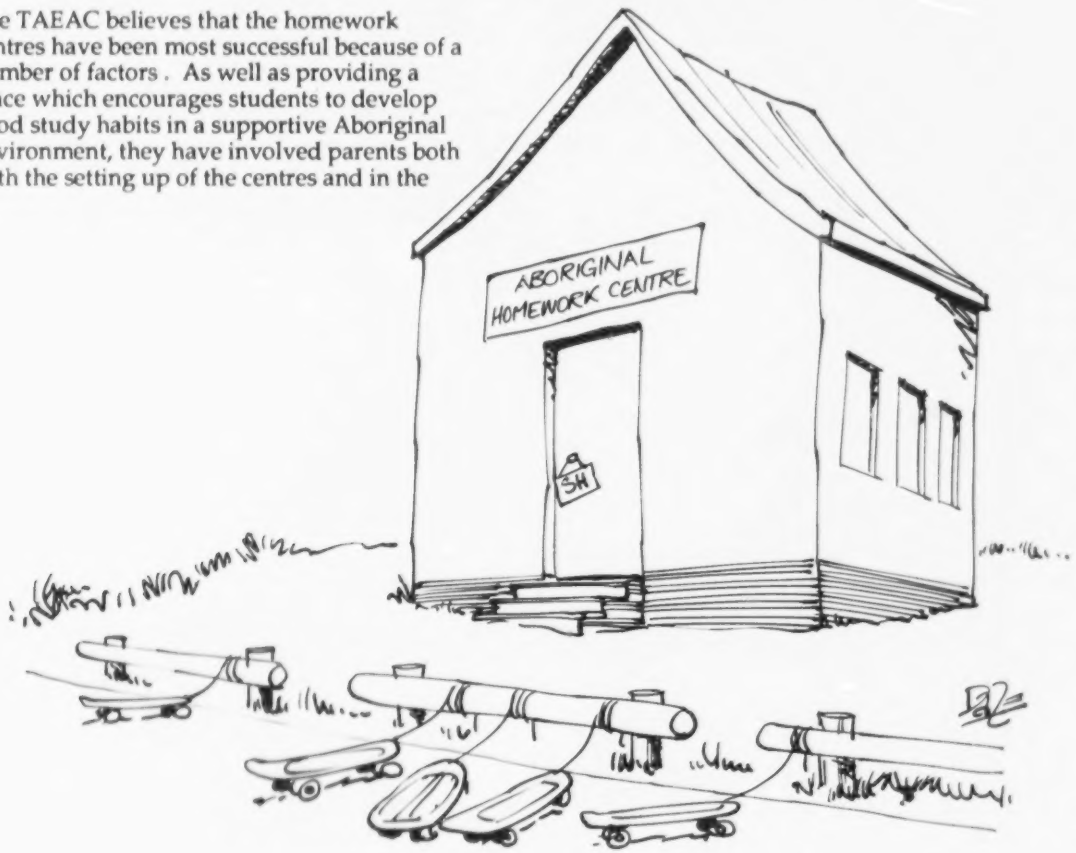
The parent groups choose the supervisors for each centre, and these supervisors are responsible for organisation, student discipline and for the tutors, who are carefully chosen for their compatibility with the Aboriginal community. Many parents themselves attend the centres regularly, as do professional members of the Aboriginal community such as doctors and lawyers. The centres have become more than just places to study, they are a focus for the community.

A visit by the writer to the Devonport homework centre in term 3, 1987, was most rewarding. The atmosphere was informal and friendly for the students and parents who were there. Children ranging from primary to early secondary attended, bringing along their homework. For those who had no homework the teacher had planned learning activities where students worked on individual programs to help them improve on areas of weakness, such as spelling reading or mathematics. Two girls played a

quiz game with one of the parents while a couple of boys attempted to design a cover for the next edition of *Targa*.

A register is kept of all the students who attend the centre and in this are recorded students' special areas of need, so that the teacher can work more effectively with them.

The TAEAC believes that the homework centres have been most successful because of a number of factors . As well as providing a place which encourages students to develop good study habits in a supportive Aboriginal environment, they have involved parents both with the setting up of the centres and in the running of them. As a consequence parents have become much more familiar with the education system and feel that they have more power within that system. The people working at the Devonport centre were very positive about the high level of self esteem which they have seen develop in the children who have attended the centre.



INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ravenswood High School

Even in the age group where schooling is compulsory, special measures are necessary to ensure that some children can attend school. Without such action, many disabled children for example, are automatically excluded from mainstream schooling.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Perhaps a measure of the success of the integration of special school students into Ravenswood High School is that it is becoming much less obvious; integration has become a normal part of school life. When teachers who participate in the scheme are asked about the program their reactions vary from enthusiastic to matter of fact. Although some teachers still prefer not to have special school students in their classes, those who do are positive about the benefits.

It is now several years since a number of students attending St Michaels School were integrated into areas of the regular program at Ravenswood High School, largely into the practical option subjects. This small beginning was due to the efforts of Mr Peter Brooker, then principal of Ravenswood High, Mr Des Wood and Mrs Pam Merrington, principal and acting principal respectively of St Michaels. When St Giles became involved, Ravenswood High was a suitable choice for students in wheelchairs due to its physical layout. It is also close to the special schools.

The main reason for choosing Ravenswood High though, is that it has a philosophy which is accepting of all students and a climate which allows for change and innovation.

There are now three special schools which send students part-time to Ravenswood High School; St Michaels, St Giles and Elphin Rise.

St Michaels caters for students with learning difficulties associated with language problems; these may be expressive and/or receptive. At the moment there are also three deaf children at the school, all of whom take part in the integration program at Ravenswood High.

St Giles has students who have a wide range of physical disabilities. At the school there are physical facilities which help to improve the quality of the students' lives, as well as learning programs to support children with such disabilities.

Elphin Rise School caters for students whose learning difficulties are such that it is not always possible for regular schools to provide appropriate programs.

High school teachers usually tend not to know a great deal about special schools. They know that there are children with special needs, but simply accept that someone else is taking care of them. Ravenswood High is accepting some of the responsibility for these students. Teachers at Ravenswood know that there are some needs these students have which can best be met in the special schools; but they accept that the regular neighbourhood high school also has a great deal to offer.

Integration has a number of benefits. It gives children with disabilities the opportunity to have a wider range of peer models for behaviour and language stimulation. It allows teachers and students in regular schools to develop understanding and acceptance of members of the community who have disabilities. It gives the child with disabilities and that child's family the opportunity to participate in the

normal life of the community.

A recent evaluation report prepared by a teacher from St Giles has identified what teachers believe to be the main aims of integration. The four most commonly perceived to be important are that students will:

- improve their ability to communicate;
- have opportunities to gain greater independence;
- talk with more students on a social level; and
- gain confidence.*

To visit Ravenswood High School, to talk to the principal and staff there, and to talk to the integration students themselves is encouraging. Rodney O'Rourke, principal of Ravenswood High School, believes that the high school is more a microcosm of society than the special schools, and that once the students with special needs are exposed to this environment, many of them blossom. This is not true of all these children but careful and continuous liaison between the schools minimises problems in this regard.

Students from special schools participate in a variety of subjects; English, mathematics, social science, typing, computer studies, cooking, sewing, child care, speech and drama, music, art, manual arts, physical education and in grade 8, self esteem. Some also participate in a small special help English group, where a recently purchased computer has proven to be a bonus for the teacher and students. Each special school student takes part in anything from one to four of these subjects.

When the program was in its early days, many of the students with special needs were fearful about going to Ravenswood. Said Sally, one girl from St Giles, now in her third year of the program, 'I even went to Ravenswood in tears!'. Many practised delaying tactics so that they were too late to be taken to particular lessons. In fact, every time some of them went it became a counselling, negotiating task for their teachers. One measure of the program's success is that students now accept their lessons at Ravenswood. At St Michael's, integration students wear their Ravenswood High School uniform with pride. The special school students, and their parents, also regard with pride subject reports from the high school. It is interesting to note that the special school students have always been particularly keen to participate in self esteem sessions.

Sally says that she is now very glad that she goes to the high school, as she has made 'heaps and heaps of friends'. John says, 'I enjoy it every day' and 'I have made a lot of friends'. Pip Williams, SM general at Ravenswood sees many small incidents that attest to the success of integration; a boy in a wheelchair playing cricket at lunchtime with the regular students, a deaf girl helping students in the small group with their work while Pip was out of the room, and another boy from St Giles giving a spelling test to the rest of the group. One self esteem group has asked Michelle, who is deaf, to teach them sign language. Students from a self esteem group at Ravenswood visited St Giles and played wheelchair basketball.

The overall impression is that once these students with special needs are in the hurly-burly of high school life, they are not very different from any other adolescent.

In many of the classes where there are integration students, an aide, Margaret Binns, is employed to assist them. She explains that she takes care not to be seen as a helper for only the students with special needs. She works with them when they need her, but also helps the others, thus minimising the differences between students. As Margaret works in such close proximity to the program, her opinion is valuable:

> 'I think integration is terrific. It works really well. I don't even see these kids as disabled; it's their personalities that you notice.'

* Jenny Macdonald, *Integrating handicapped children in ordinary schools*, 1987

It cannot be said that the integration program is without problems. It involves a great deal of hard work for people like Jenny MacDonald from St Giles, making sure that students are happy in the high school and that they are placed in the classes where they are most likely to benefit. Another problem, perhaps more for the special schools than for Ravenswood, is the substantial amount of time students spend travelling between the special schools and Ravenwood. Although it is only a ten-minute drive, timetabling restrictions at the high school mean that the special school students must come and go in order to fit in with high school classes. This is carefully monitored so that the travelling does not become a heavy burden to the students. Whenever possible, they are slotted into the timetable so that they can spend recess or lunch times at the high school to maximise the social advantages.

The transfer of students between schools is without doubt an expensive business; so too is the eight hours aide time. PEP funding has therefore been invaluable. However, many people were emphatic that the program is so successful not just because of money, but because of the school climate and the willingness of all parties concerned to provide the very best for these students with special needs.

Encouraging student and parent participation

A vital part of the PEP philosophy has been the efforts made to improve participation and equity in education, by encouraging a wide range of parent and student decision-making and curriculum planning.

For parents there must be access to information, formal representation on decision-making bodies, and opportunities to make worthwhile contributions to curricular and extra-curricular activities. A feature of PEP committees both as school and system level has been their parent and student representation.

A thrust of student participation under PEP has focused on increasing retention rates, but student participation also means increasing student representation, increasing student ownership and involvement in the learning process and increasing student decision-making skills. In the last year of the program there has been a focus on the two latter objectives.

This section describes a number of school programs which have found practical ways to address the issues of student and parent participation.

PARENTS AND SCHOOL CHANGE

Cosgrove High School

The whole school community must be committed to proposed improvements (in curriculum). Parents are more likey to feel confidence about proposed changes when they feel they have been able to influence the process throughout.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

Picture a parent arriving at a local high school. Often it is with faltering steps she approaches the office, apologetically that she asks for a teacher, humbly that she listens to and accepts that teacher's advice about her child. An exaggeration? Perhaps. But it has long been the case that parents do not move as freely in their children's high schools as they do in their primary schools, and many perceive, rightly or wrongly, that they are not welcome in high schools, unless of course, it is for a special parent-teacher event.

Cosgrove High School has changed this for their parents with an initiative undertaken through PEP funding. The school uses these funds to employ a School Community Co-ordinator, Marilyn Langham, for sixteen hours a week. Marilyn started her work at Cosgrove in 1985, and from small beginnings has fostered a minor revolution in parent participation.

The program began with a low-key attempt to encourage parents to attend a series of kitchen conferences. The first of these was attended by six parents, who discussed their children and their schooling and identified issues which they found frustrating. Marilyn's task was then to act as a facilitator, setting up discussion groups and guest speakers as the parents indicated interest and need. Soon, kitchens were too small, and the meetings moved to the school. Although a few parents dropped out at this stage, the sessions continued to grow in popularity, with a wide range of parents attending, from working parents who were able to use flexitime, to parents with home duties.

Through discussing topics such as drugs, peer group pressure, parenting and self esteem, the parents developed an interest in what the school was doing in some of these areas. As a group they became interested in the Peer Support Program. Armed with the information they had collected together with a proposal for the program's introduction, they approached the school in term 3, 1986, with the principal's blessing. At a time when most of the planning for 1987 was well underway, teachers at the school were confronted by a well-prepared group of parents who knew what they wanted. The result was that, before the year was out, all grade 9 students at the school, nine parents and six teachers were trained in the Peer Support Program. The program was introduced in 1987, and all agree that it has been highly beneficial, particularly for the grade 10 students. But for the parents, it meant a big step in their involvement in the school; not only had they been instrumental in starting the program, but they are also heavily involved as adult facilitators in its running.

Their next step was to look at the personal relationships courses offered at Cosgrove High School. Because they felt that what was offered was too little too late, parents offered to become involved in setting up a program which catered for all students from grades 7 to 10. A three-day seminar for six parents, six students and six teachers was run by Sue Williams of the Family Planning Organisation, and the school has now introduced a carefully planned program for all students.

Not only has the parent group been able to influence offerings in the school curriculum, it has also led to a greater participation by parents in day to day matters at the school. Many parents visit the school regularly to take part in

book conferencing. In commerce, because parents expressed particular interest in how the subject works, the teacher has opened up the program so that parents actually come in and sit in on lessons. Parents also play a large part in the orientation program for primary school children; one session was attended by one hundred parents, causing some embarrassment when there weren't enough cups to go around! The culmination of the 1987 parents program was a 'Parents as Partners Week' early in term 3. During this week, parents were timetabled to take classes, were invited to sit in on regular classes, and participated in the school walk-athon. There was also a high quality exhibition of parents' art work on show at the school during this week.

Another way in which the school improves its communication with the parents is through the Cosgrove High School *Community Newsletter*. A weekly bulletin, it contains news about student and parent activities. In it can be found reports on workshops of many kinds, such as 'Learning and Teaching Science at Cosgrove', 'Self Confidence and Your Child' and 'Unemployment and Job Seeking'. Sometimes there is an article written by a teacher to explain a particular aspect of schooling.

A particular benefit of having a School Community Co-ordinator like Marilyn is that she is also able to liaise between parents and staff members. People feel quite free to ring Marilyn to talk about their children's problems, because that is her job, whereas they might be a little reluctant to disturb busy teachers, who quite often are not available anyway because they are teaching. Marilyn is then able to speak to the appropriate teacher and set up meetings if necessary.

Marilyn feels that because of her role, confrontations and misunderstandings have often been avoided. For this reason, and because she has seen a gradual development of the power of parents within the school, she is highly committed to the program. She believes that a start to a whole community involvement in the school has been made and wants to see this developed. Whenever possible, local businesses, institutions and the Council are involved as part of the program. This is important if the school is to be identified as part of the community and vice versa.

SCHOOL CHANGE
Parent + Teacher Committee
1 Parent Tutoring
2 Technology in the Classroom
3
IS THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THE SIZE OF THESE DESKS ?

What has happened at Cosgrove High School is the result of several human factors. One is that the principal, Ralph Spaulding is enthusiastic about having such a high level of input from parents and encourages and supports them whenever possible. Another is that the staff is prepared to welcome parents and their initiatives into the school. Finally there is the existence of the role of School Community Co-ordinator which provides a central identifiable figure for liaising with parents and for facilitating their continued involvement in the school.

STUDENT PARTICIPATION: SOME EXAMPLES

A number of activities might be considered...to develop positive student attitudes and teacher morale (including) pilot projects involving fully democratic and participating planning and decision-making processes in secondary schools.

Commonwealth Schools Commission,
Participation and Equity in Australian Schools, 1985.

The Scottsdale High School Project

In 1987, twenty-five grade 8 students produced a documentary video, *Dredging Up the Past*, which won two national film-making awards. At the Student Film Festival, organised by the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM), *Dredging Up the Past* won the Junior Secondary Award for Best Film and the Oceanic Media Network Award which is an Australia wide marketing offer.

The video screens in two parts. The first tells of the history of tin mining in the North East, paying particular attention to the awesome Dorset bucket dredge stranded half on the banks of a lagoon and half in the lagoon itself. The second part tells the story of how the students made their video. From an audience point of view the film is meant to demonstrate to other students what can be done with videos and how it can be done, consequently promoting the use of video equipment in schools by the students themselves.

Dredging Up the Past was filmed on location near Gladstone at the foothills of Mount Cameron. While on location for four days students worked to their pre-written story board and were responsible for filming, interviewing and sound recording. Narration and music were recorded in the school and later fine tuned at the 7EX studio.

Not long after the success of the video PEP interviewed the students involved. Here are some of the highlights:

PEP Did you have much say in deciding the topic of the video?

Students No.

PEP Don't you think you'd be able to decide on a topic yourselves?

Anita I don't think we would have been able to decide on one topic. It was a good topic, anyway, so why not.

Sarah I think we could have. If we got some ideas, if you discuss 'em and listen to everyone's point of view and vote on it.

Marty Nar, it would just be riots because everyone would want their own way.

PEP Fair enough. How would we solve that problem. What do you do when there's a group of you and you want to decide which film to see?

Sally You listen to what people want to say about it and vote on it.

PEP So you can make decisions in groups.

Students Yeah.

PEP That's good because too often people say 'why let students make decisions when they don't want to?'

(This discussion on student decision-making went on for some time. The general feeling was that students enjoyed making **real** decisions **and** carrying them out. However they were reticent to do so if they felt that they lacked the necessary skills, and the support to bear the consequences. The following comment by Jason best summed up their feelings on the matter).

Jason You gotta learn **how** to make them first, 'cause if you don't know how to do it you don't want to do it.

PEP I agree. OK, did you have any arguments?

Jason Only trying to choose the title but we worked it out.

Stuart We brainstormed.

PEP That's interesting. Now tell me how you got involved in the project

Stuart We were picked but you had to put in a job application for it first.

Melanie There were a lot of applications, about 60 or 70 from all different grade 8 classes.

(The use of applications promotes commitment and a sense of fairness).

PEP Why did you apply?

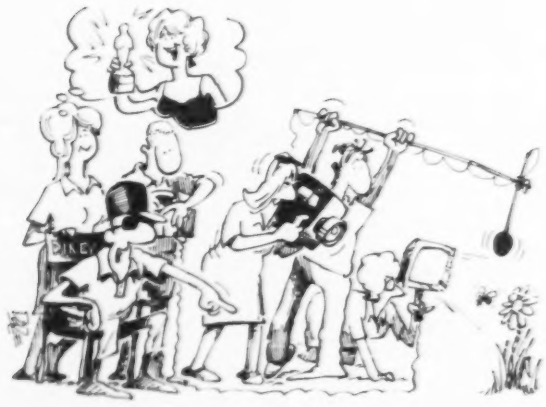
Melanie Because it would be different, using cameras an' that.

Serena I thought it would be a bit of fun.

Jason 'Cos it would be good to help you get a job 'cos you'd know how to do it.

Sarah The topic interested me, the dredge, you know.

PEP How did you work with your teachers, get on with them?



Students (Various forms of laughter.)

Stuart I think a lot of us got on much better than we did in the normal classroom (general agreement). They opened up a bit more.

PEP What do you mean?

Stuart In the classroom you couldn't just have a general sort of conversation like you do with your mates or anything.

PEP Does it help you learn more with teachers like that?

Student Yeah

PEP Why?

Adam You feel you can ask more questions and talk about things that interest you better than you can in the classroom because you're more relaxed. And they don't worry so much when just mucking around a little bit.

Marty In school, teachers get up tight about little things too much. Yeah, also if they were worried about their last class, they come in an' blow your class up. They should relax more with us 'n' we wouldn't muck around so much.

PEP What was it like working with the film consultant? He's not a teacher.

Students He was good, yeah.

Arielle He never told us off. I was doing this filming thing and he was trying to tell me what to do and he was getting fed up. Later he came and said he was sorry for getting fed up. That was nice. He was more like a friend than a teacher.

Marty He told us to call him Phil and it helped to make it seem like he was just there to help us. We'd listen to him more and do what he told us to do.

PEP But did you respect him?

Students Yeah, of course...he knew what he was talking about...

(As with other PEP student participation projects, students definitely appreciate the change in student-teacher relationships that takes place when students are more directly involved in the learning process. Also it is evident that students feel that they have much to learn from working as partners with adults, other than teachers).

PEP Let's move on. What did you learn the most?

Annette All the technical things.

Students Yeah...using the camera.... editing.... interviewing.

Adam Script writing, we wouldn't have succeeded in doing the film unless we could do that.

Melanie We had to work together to make one video, which was pretty hard to do with such a large group like this.

Sally Yeah, but we worked in small groups a lot.

PEP What did you enjoy the most?

Kylie We enjoyed seeing the things come together and the editing in a real studio.

Stuart We didn't expect it to be as good as it was.

PEP Do you feel proud.

Students Yeah!

Kylie After winning the awards, an' it being on TV an' in newspapers, that was really good - being recognized for what we did.

(Not all projects can win national awards but from interviews with other students, it is clear that recognition is a powerful ongoing motivation. Where students are more directly involved, it is easier to provide this recognition).

Mark When you were here last you brought up the idea of a school radio. I'd like to have a go at that.

PEP Good, well how do you feel about the future. Are you enthusiastic about doing something else.

Students Yes.

(This response was overwhelming. Moreover as the principal pointed out these grade 8 students, with all their enthusiasm, experience and skills will be in the school for another two years, doing new things and also acting as a valuable resource for the school).

PEP What?

Marty I'd like to do more of a play on video.

Students Yeah... drama... acting... scripts... costumes...

PEP If you make any money out of the Oceanic Media Network award, what would you do with the money?

Adam Buy more video equipment.

Sally Set up a studio so we can do more things like drama.

(A galaxy of exciting ideas - some rather exotic - followed).

Melanie We'd have to have someone to handle the money for us.

PEP Don't you reckon you could do that yourselves. There must be someone in the group who's good at maths, trustworthy and all that. They'd have to work with the bursar.

Students Jason could...yeah...
(What followed was, '...and this person could help him"... and that person could do" ...I could do...'. Clearly the group was keen and working along co-operative learning lines).

Student Enterprise

In 1987 PEP initiated and sponsored a small number of Student Enterprises. An educational student enterprise can be described as a structural framework within which relevant and applied experiential learning takes place because there is a built-in purpose for action - a reason for learning.

Oatlands District project

As a way of promoting the study of local history and improving students' appreciation of the importance of tourism to the town's economic survival, the school decided to try a student enterprise approach. A class of grade 8 social science students researched local

history, which included interviewing senior citizens. With their information on the word processor, the next task was to select and develop materials. With the help of teachers, PEP personnel and language and drama consultants, they worked the material into script.

With the dramatised scripts and original music supplied by senior Kingston High School music students, the aim was to produce an audio cassette guided tour of the town for hire to visiting tourists. Time ran out! However everything is ready to go in the new year. The group will advertise in the school and hold auditions for student actors to do the actual recording.

The year 11 students at the Oatlands College Centre became involved by developing a promotional poster for the tourist cassettes.

IN THE OLDEN DAYS TRAVELLING ON THESE ROADS WAS A DANGEROUS AND BUMPY ORDEAL
SEE OATLANDS WITH AN AUDIO GUIDE TOUR CASSETTE PAINSTAKINGLY PRODUCED BY LOCAL KIDS

Deloraine High School project

A group of grade ten students set out with the purpose of researching, developing and marketing a further education promotional kit. FEEDS (Further Education Enterprise Deloraine Students) read endless information, visited further education institutions and interviewed a multitude of people to gather the materials necessary for their workshops. As time and the magnitude of their task tailored their ambitions, a promotional workbook to be used by grade 10 in their region became the final product. The group has decided that net proceeds from the venture will go to the school and the charity organisation, Camp Quality.

It must be remembered that these student enterprise initiatives were experiments and that mistakes were made. Perhaps the most important lesson learned was that in order to maximise student participation and curriculum learning outcomes, the product and production process must be manageable.

To avoid ideological overtones and practices the word 'enterprise' should be used in its old fashioned sense of - making things happen. It is about learning and that is how it should be used and judged. It is recommended that student enterprises should be built into existing curricular and certificated where possible.

The mini-enterprise model ensures that learning is active, not passive. It fosters both individual and collective purpose. Individual decision making, the sense of responsibility, the opportunity to contribute and achieve, and the feeling of belonging all promote active learning. It may be worth noting that invariably students enjoy participating in mini-enterprise projects.

Student course design

...too radical...over the top...too ambitious... won't work...people will feel threatened ...risky, to say the least .... These and other troublesome thoughts were going through my mind as I navigated the corridors of Hobart College. I was on my way to meet eight Community Studies students. They wanted PEP support to re-develop their life skills course. Students writing their own courses! What next! An hour later I was convinced and just as enthusiastic as they were. Two months later a promotional poster landed on my desk, titled 'A Course Written By Students For Students'. Lin Thorpe, the brave teacher in the 'back seat', shared the students' feelings that the present course wasn't working; it didn't cater for their needs and, as Lin put it, it wasn't gutsy enough for non-academic students of their age. The students strongly believed that they would learn more if they made the course more relevant and applied it to the real world. Believing that the exercise would be a valuable learning experience in itself, Lin accepted the built-in risks and allowed the students to do it their way.

In the first review sessions students expressed strong opinions about the present course, often negative. As the sessions continued and students were increasingly confronted with the challenge of how to improve things, they became more constructive. By the time they were about to retreat for their major weekend workshop to tackle head-on the course reconstruction task, their feelings were positive and a sense of commitment was colouring the entire undertaking.

Locked away with the students and Lin for the weekend was an adviser from the Youth Affairs Council and a student teacher. At this camp the students learned to work under pressure, day and night till the tasks were done and a detailed course outline was in place. They had

done it. They had proven that the strongest motivation for learning is to have a reason for learning.

The three main areas of study in the course are Employment, Worthwhile Social Action and Going Overseas. The course will be operated on the principles of negotiation and consensus. Although most of the students involved will be in employment next year, they have offered to return to the College as adult advisers to support Lin and the inaugural students taking their course.

Lin's advice to teachers considering a similar exercise is:

- be prepared to accept the risks;
- be prepared to accept criticism from the students;
- use an AOT (Adult Other than Teacher) to inspire maturity in the students, to defuse the traditional school v. us mentality, to provide a bridge to the 'real world' and to act as a supportive and refreshing asset for the teacher; and
- above all don't give up; it takes time for things to fall into place.

It is worth noting that Bridgewater High School adopted a similar approach in order to allow girls to review and re-develop courses where their needs were not being adequately addressed. The school's music department also used this approach to develop a work related unit.